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Six aircraft carriers ferried 423 Japanese planes to attack Pearl Harbor. Some of the planes were equipped with B5N2 torpedoes whose pilots flew in a *shotai* (three-plane flight). This image depicts the only-known closeup of B5N2s being flown to Oahu on the morning of December 7, 1941. David Aiken—who wrote “Torpedoing Pearl Harbor,” published in the December 2001 issue of *Military History* magazine—tells us: “The plane at right shows the wooden fins added to the aerial torpedo.”

The clouds had cleared that Sunday morning. Every pilot had an unobstructed view as 183 Japanese airplanes approached Pearl Harbor.

With strike force orders from their high command, and detailed information supplied by Takeo Yoshikawa, pilots knew their targets. In less than two hours, the U.S. Pacific Fleet would be horrendously crippled. Some of the ships - like the USS *Arizona* (BB 39) which had served the country for many years - would become graves.

At 7:53 a.m., Mitsuo Fuchida could not believe his eyes! He saw no evidence the Americans expected an attack.

Fuchida, and the men he led, would face no resistance on the first wave of the assault. Even before bombs were dropped and torpedoes were fired, he ecstatically transmitted a message of “success without resistance” to the fleet:

*To ra! To ra! To ra!*

Wanting to disable American planes before attacking the ships, Japanese pilots were astonished at another unexpected gift. As a security precaution against sabotage, U.S. pilots had been ordered to keep their planes close together and in the open.

As Japanese carrier bombers (called “*Vals*” by the Allies), carrier attack planes (called “*Kate*”), torpedo bombers and Zeros swooped over Pearl Harbor and Hickam Field, American air power on the ground was decimated. Fortunately, no U.S. aircraft carrier was in port on December 7.

Battleships, lined up without torpedo nets alongside Ford Island, were also easy targets for Japanese pilots. One of those pilots took a picture documenting final moments of the great ships. It shows the wake of torpedoes about to strike the *Oklahoma*, the *West Virginia* and the *California* as Hickam Field burns in the background.

With the *Oklahoma* crippled at 7:57 a.m., Lt. Commander Murata, who led the torpedo assault, makes his escape.

As the catastrophe of Battleship Row began, a Japanese pilot snapped the initial aftermath of a torpedo strike: a huge burst of sea spray. Within minutes, fire and smoke filled the sky.

The *Shaw* took a direct hit. When her on-board munitions ignited, the ship exploded. Within hours, the once-mighty *Shaw* was a jumbled piece of wreckage.

At 7:58 a.m., Lt. Commander Logan Ramsey realized what was happening. He dispatched an urgent message:

*Air Raid on Pearl Harbor. This is not Drill.*

The *Arizona*, and most of her crew, had only minutes to live.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/ATTACK-on-PEARL-HARBOR-Pearl-Harbor>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/ATTACK-on-PEARL-HARBOR-Pearl-Harbor>

## Media Stream

### Japanese B5N2 Aerial Torpedoes En Route to Oahu

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This image depicts the only-known closeup of B5N2s being flown to Oahu on the morning of December 7, 1941.

David Aiken—who wrote “Torpedoing Pearl Harbor,” published in the December 2001 issue of *Military History* magazine—tells us:

*The plane at right shows the wooden fins added to the aerial torpedo.*

*Click on the image for a better view.*

*Image, described above, online via the U.S. National Archives.*

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Japanese-B5N2-Aerial-Torpedoes-En-Route-to-Oahu>

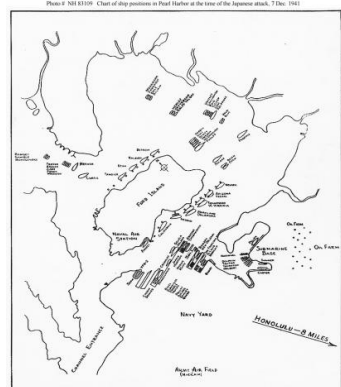


### Attack - Four Types of Planes

Image online, courtesy U.S. National Park Service.

PD

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### Chart of Ship Positions - Pearl Harbor, December 7

Image, described above, online courtesy Naval History & Heritage Command.

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<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Chart-of-Ship-Positions-Pearl-Harbor-December-7>



### Pearl Harbor - Battleship Row at Ford Island

Official Navy photograph, online courtesy U.S. National Archives.

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<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Pearl-Harbor-Battleship-Row-at-Ford-Island>

Photo # 80-G-15441 Crashed Japanese Type 99 carrier bomber, recovered after the Pearl Harbor attack



### Pearl Harbor Attack - Crashed Type 99 Bomber

Official U.S. Navy Photograph, National Archives Collection.

PD

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<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Pearl-Harbor-Attack-Crashed-Type-99-Bomber>



### Pearl Harbor Attack - Effects of Torpedo Strike

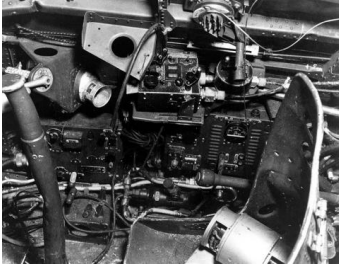
Photo, U.S. Navy Historical Center.

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Photo # 80-G-22158 Cockpit of Japanese Type 00 Carrier Fighter that crashed during the Pearl Harbor raid



### Pearl Harbor Attack - Inside a "Zero" Cockpit

Official U.S. Navy Photograph, National Archives Collection.

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<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Pearl-Harbor-Attack-Inside-a-Zero-Cockpit>

Photo # 80-G-182249 Japanese plane leaves Shokaku to attack Pearl Harbor, 7 Dec. 1941



### Pearl Harbor Attack - Kate (Type 97) Leaves Carrier

Official U.S. Navy Photograph, National Archives Collection.

PD

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Pearl-Harbor-Attack-Kate-Type-97-Leaves-Carrier>



### Pearl Harbor Attack - Murata Escapes after Strike

Photo, courtesy U.S. Navy Historical Center.

PD

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<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Pearl-Harbor-Attack-Murata-Escapes-after-Strike>



### Pearl Harbor Attack - Planes Burn at Hickam Field

Image online, courtesy FDR Library.

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<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Pearl-Harbor-Attack-Planes-Burn-at-Hickam-Field>



### Pearl Harbor Attack - Shaw Explosion

Photo, U.S. Navy Historical Center.

PD

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Pearl-Harbor-Attack-Shaw-Explosion>



### Pearl Harbor Attack - Torpedoes En Route to Battleships

Image online, courtesy Naval History & Heritage Command

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<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Pearl-Harbor-Attack-Torpedoes-En-Route-to-Battleships>



Photo # 80-G-32908 Japanese Type 99 carrier bomber in action during the Pearl Harbor raid

### Pearl Harbor Attack - Type 99 Carrier Bomber in Action

Official U.S. Navy Photograph, National Archives Collection.

PD

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Pearl-Harbor-Attack-Type-99-Carrier-Bomber-in-Action>



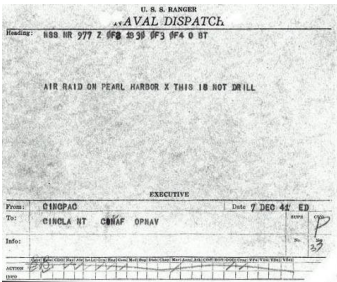
### Pearl Harbor Attack - Wreckage of the Shaw

Photo, U.S. Navy Historical Center.

PD

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Pearl-Harbor-Attack-Wreckage-of-the-Shaw>



### Pearl Harbor Attack Message - Air Raid

U.S. National Archives.

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View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Pearl-Harbor-Attack-Message-Air-Raid>



### USS Arizona - In 1921

Image online, courtesy U.S. National Archives.

PD

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/USS-Arizona-In-1921>